Using Webquests in Special Education Personnel Preparation

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the poster session is to share, inform and demonstrate the design and use of a webquest project utilized in an undergraduate course introducing students to the field of special education. The webquest was designed to incorporate three broad goals. First, students will be guided through the use of a technology based (primarily web-based) project. Second, students will engage in self-direct journey through highly debated topic in the field of education. Third, students will work on teams to both ease web anxiety and perform in team related debate.

SUMMARY OF CONTENT

Higher education is confronted with the challenge of teaching adults in a manner that is sufficiently salient to the learner so that they engage in behavior change related to their chosen field. Teacher education is further challenged to teach teachers and thus model a format to be taken into the field. In any course, we are faced with disseminating vast amounts of information. However, simultaneously, we are attempting to incorporate activities for critical thinking, problem-solving, and application to the “real world”. A further challenge in higher education is incorporating the use of technology both in our own classrooms and in our students’ academic lives. Of course, each course presents itself with a new group of students with a wide range of technological experience and comfort.

The webquest was designed to utilize a case method form of instruction with a technology presentation. The webquest is designed to present a challenge to a team of students. Thus, the team can support and enhance any level of technology experience and comfort. The student teams are assigned roles for the particular problem presented in the quest. In the case of the current quest, students are presented with the problem of deciding about an inclusion model for a child with special needs. The team members are regular educator, special educator and parent. Students are provided with initial support to begin the process. They then log onto to the webquest and are able to utilize the site as a starting point for the quest. The students engage on a self-directed journey to gather information, form opinions and make decisions.

The presentation of the webquest will provide information as to the design of the quest, the process and the end result of the quest. Demonstration on a laptop will also be available.